

Heidelberg Catechism Q&A112 – When A Lie Is Not A Sin

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

Some people panic when they hear that there are times when lying is not wrong and lying **can be an act of faith.**

Surprisingly, these same people who panic at the thought of telling a lie, **support justifiable homicide or killing someone in self-defense,** even though they believe they are not to kill.

These same people rightly believe you should stay home from worship if they have Covid, though they are **commanded to worship each Sabbath.**

They realize following the letter of the law kills, but following the spirit of the law gives life. You will see this again today when we deal with this extra teaching from the 9th command.

Our headings are:

By Faith the Midwives Deceived Pharaoh and protected the Babies

By Faith Rahab Deceived the Assassins and protected the Spies

By Faith Samuel Deceived the Bethlehemites and protected his and David's life

By Faith Joshua Deceived the enemy and saved the whole Israelite nation

Our goals are: That you will **understand the extent and intent of Law** 9, in order to properly obey it through faith in Jesus Christ.

By Faith the Midwives Deceived Pharaoh and protected the Babies

Exodus 1: 15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; 16 and he said, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, **then you shall kill him;** but if it is a daughter, then she shall live." 17 **But the midwives feared God,** and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, **but saved the male children alive.** 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?" 19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; **for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.**"

1. Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill all boys born to Jewish parents in order to quell the prosperity of the Jews.

These boys were not guilty of anything worthy of execution. And God had made it clear the unjust taking of human life is sin.

Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

In order to protect against unjust killing, God permitted justifiable homicide, and even war – legal killing of the enemy. These midwives knew God's law and feared God.

What did they do?

2. The midwives deceived Pharaoh (their way of fighting) to protect their lives and the lives of the innocent Jewish boys!

The midwives had no strength (spears and swords), and no opportunity to kill Pharaoh who was trying to kill innocent children. **The weapon of their war was lying.**

The midwives knew if they obeyed Pharaoh's command, they would have been guilty of murder before God. But **faith in God made them courageous.** And God blessed their work of faith!

Exodus 1:20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. 21 And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

The liberal paymaster, gave the midwives a great reward for their trust in him and obedience to his law.

The midwives feared God and they showed it by fighting to protect the innocent – **just like one might show his fear of God by going to war and killing those who threaten his family.** And this reward of having children of their own (for it appears the ladies were childless) was after they lied to Pharaoh to protect the innocent children.

Their act of fearing God was handily rewarded by God. **God would have been angry if they did not fight with a lie,** their only weapon. **Their lie was an act of faith!**

3. Lessons:

a. Do not to use the justifiable lie as an excuse for lying to avoid legal punishment for yourself or your brother, however, as this fight was for the protecting the innocent.

Don't lie so you could get a discount...don't lie so that your children can get a lower price at the movies!

b. When you do have to lie under these circumstances make sure you are acting from faith, not fear or selfishness. If you are **not** acting from faith – faith to please God -it becomes a sin – a serious sin to you!

By Faith Rahab Deceived the Assassins and protected the Spies

1. Rahab lied to protect the innocent lives of the Jewish soldiers who were sent to spy out the land God had given them.

Joshua 2: 1 Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. 2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." 3 So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." 4 Then the woman **took the two men and hid them.** So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. 8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men: "**I know that the LORD has given you the land,** that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. 10 "**For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you** when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 "And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, **He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.**

2. Rahab's work was an act of faith and she was rewarded for her act of faith.

She is mentioned on multiple occasions in the NT as a faithful woman. Never is she reprimanded for her lie. The Bible often highlights the sins of saints to contrast God's grace, but not here. For instance, David was called a murderer for killing Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, but Rahab was never called a liar.

Hebrews 11:31 **By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.**

James 2:25 Likewise, was **not Rahab the harlot also justified by works [of faith]** when she received the messengers and **sent them out another way?**

James meant Rahab's work was evidence of her faith. She sneaked the spies out to save them and sent the Canaanite criminals in the wrong direction to look for the spies.

More, Rahab would have been guilty of treason-selling out her country – by what she did, **but God never condemned her as being guilty of treason.** Her crime was not a sin, so God would not punish her for that.

Instead, **she was rewarded by being one of the mothers -an ancestor - of Jesus.**

3. Lessons:

a. Those who say you must speak the truth, regardless of the circumstances, and trust God to take care of you, are virtually saying you must put down the baseball bat when someone attacks your children with a knife, and trust God will protect your children!

Putting down the baseball bat will make God angry with you-not proud of you!

Putting down the baseball bat is an act of weakness and disobedience. God wants you to adore him...not just obey the letter of the law!

b. Suppose your child has measles, would you say you must bring him to church because God commands worship each Sabbath, or will you keep him home so he doesn't spread it to the other kids? Obviously, you will keep him home and **yet you will not be guilty of breaking the Sabbath!**

By Faith Samuel Deceived the Bethlehemites and protected his and David's life

1 Samuel 16: 1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons." **2** And Samuel said, "**How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.**" And the LORD said, "**Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'**" **3** "Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall

do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you." 4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"

1. The clearest case of what we call the "justifiable lie," was where God explicitly told Samuel to deceive the Bethlehemites who would have killed him and David when he went to anoint David as king.

Samuel deceived the Bethlehemites through an act of faith in God! (He adored God, not just obey the letter of the law!) He took God's Word as truth. If God told him to do something, it couldn't be wrong.

2. In this case, Saul was as a vengeful king who would kill anyone who threatened his position.

In order to protect the innocent, God told Samuel to conceal the truth (lie).

Those who argue that under no circumstances you can tell a lie would **have preferred the death of the innocent Samuel and David rather than obey God.**

They are demanding what God does not demand.

3. During David's life there were many other such occasions...when lies were used to protect the innocent.

Jonathan told his father he sent David to Bethlehem to see if his father wanted to kill David. It was a lie intended to protect David's life.

David told the priest Ahimelech he was on a secret mission for King Saul when in fact Saul was after him to kill him and he was running away... He lied to protect his and the life of his innocent men.

4. Lessons:

a. Don't take a literalist approach to the Scripture. God wants you to obey the spirit of the law. Don't get stuck on the letter. **The letter kills, but the spirit gives life.**

By Faith Joshua Deceived the enemy and saved the whole Israelite nation

1. In many wars God commanded his people to deceive (lie to) those who were trying to kill them.

God required deception in order to protect the innocent. The Lord commands you to kill in war, even though murder is wrong, so wouldn't he command you to lie in war— a lesser act?

2. Example: God commanded Israel to set an ambush to deliberately make people believe a lie.

Joshua 8:4 And he commanded them, saying: "Behold, **you shall lie in ambush against the city**, behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5 "Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city; and it will come about, when they come out against us as at the first, that we shall flee before them. 6 **"For they will come out after us till we have drawn them from the city**, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us as at the first.' Therefore we will flee before them. 7 **"Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city**, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 "And it will be, when you have taken the city, that you shall set the city on fire. According to the commandment of the LORD you shall do. **See, I have commanded you.**"

3. Lessons:

a. Consider a practical case: Suppose Grandma spans your child and leaves a mark. Do you have an obligation to call the government? In many cases the government demands you do and it is criminal not to. What will you do?

Speaking the truth might cause the government to destroy your family. Hiding the truth might (lying) might save that family. You have to love God. And you will act from faith in God (which results in obedience).

You will be more afraid of God than of the civil authorities.

Conclusion:

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Study God's law and learn the spirit of the law. Remember, if you only take the letter of the law you will be guilty of Pharisaism, something Christ despised. But when you obey the spirit of God's law you will bring glory to Christ – the one to whom you owe everything. He is the one who went to Calvary for you!

2. Speak the truth when you are required and teach your children to speak the truth.

But also explain that if you have to kill someone or deceive someone to protect the innocent it is not breaking God's law.

If you have to kill or lie to protect the innocent, it is an act of faith – faith in Jesus.

It is not something of which you ought to be ashamed.

(Sometimes there are bad consequences for speaking the truth, but there are always consequences in obeying God.) The state may punish you.

3. Those who argue they must always speak the truth regardless of the situation might feel spiritually superior, but they are not. They are literalists who should look back to the spirit of the law.

Finally, you have broken the 9th law in letter and in spirit. You have broken all laws. But God is rich in mercy. He offers forgiveness of sins and adoption as his children to all who call on him for help. He offers this forgiveness of sins and adoption because Jesus took the punishment of sinners when he died on the cross.